

2.2.17 MINERAL RESOURCES

Federal lands within the NCA and designated Wilderness Areas, subject to valid existing rights, were withdrawn from location, entry and patent under the 1872 General Mining Law by the NCA Act (§ 6(a)). Valid existing rights for mining claims in the NCA and wilderness at the time of designation will be determined consistent with existing regulations. Claims found to be valid will be managed under applicable mining laws and regulations. There are no existing mineral leases within the NCA or Wilderness Areas and the legislation eliminated future leasing. A small number of existing gravel pit permits are held by BLM and the counties. The NCA Act provides for the continuing use of these pits in support of road maintenance.

Areas within the planning area but outside the NCA and Wilderness Areas, including the South Playa, the LCT Area and narrow strips of public land between Wilderness Areas and associated with wilderness access routes in the eastern portion of the planning area are the focus of Mineral Resources decisions related to locatable and leasable minerals.

Objective

To recognize valid existing rights and allow development of mineral resources in the planning area, consistent with the intent and requirements of the NCA Act.

Locatable Minerals Management

Locatable minerals are metallic and non-metallic minerals, including gold, silver, fluorspar and mica, regulated under the general mining laws such as the Mining Law of 1872. Miners locate claims to acquire mineral rights and thus the term Locatable Minerals. When a valuable deposit is found, the mining claim may be patented and title obtained to both the mineral and surface land.

South Playa and LCT Area

MIN-1: Subject to valid existing rights, federal lands within the South Playa Area, the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Area and vehicle access routes outside the NCA, as shown on Map 2-11, will be withdrawn from location, entry and patent under authority of the 1872 General Mining Law and other applicable laws and regulations.

Leasable Minerals Management

Oil and gas, coal, geothermal, sodium, and other similar minerals are available through mineral leasing. Leases are issued for specific periods of time, and the lessee pays a rental fee and royalties on the minerals produced.

South Playa and LCT Area

MIN-2: Subject to the terms of existing leases, federal lands within the Lahontan Cutthroat Trout Area and vehicle access routes outside the NCA are withdrawn from the mineral leasing laws.

MIN 3: The South Playa (14,672 acres) as shown on Map 2-12 is closed to sodium/potassium leasing and development.

MIN-4: The South Playa is open to new geothermal leasing.

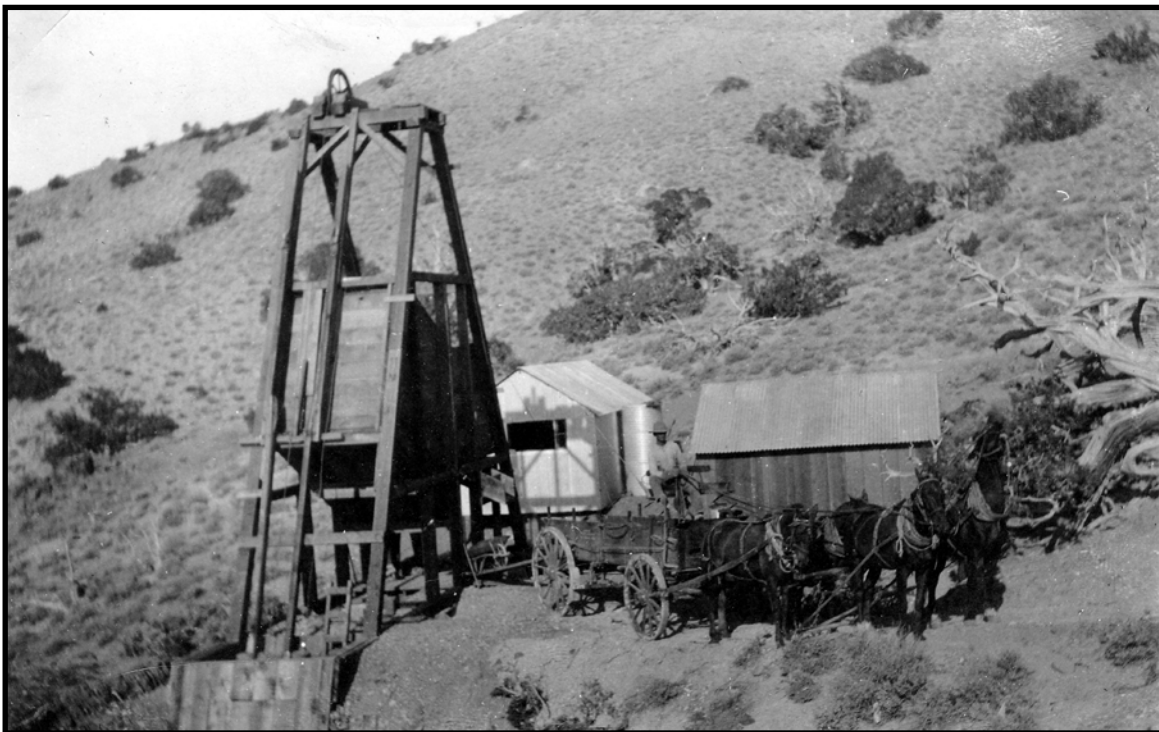
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Note: Geothermal leases in the South Playa will be administered under the terms of the leases and applicable laws and regulations. The existing geothermal leases would be extended for: 1) five years if drilling over the end of the primary lease term (10 years) or production of byproducts occurs, 2) up to two 5-year periods if diligent development occurs, and 3) for as long as unit commitment occurs. If geothermal resources are produced, or are capable of being produced in commercial quantities, the lease will be placed in additional term for 40 years from the end of the primary period, as long as production continues. If at the end of the additional term, the land is not needed for other purposes and production is ongoing, the lessee would have a preferential right to renew the lease for an additional 40-year period under the terms and conditions applied.

Salable Minerals Management

Common sand, gravel and other construction and road construction and maintenance materials are considered salable minerals. They are normally available to the public through material sales at fair market value or through free use permits to government agencies and nonprofit organizations.

MIN-5: Gravel pits and rock sources may be permitted, developed and used for the maintenance of roads under the terms of the Mineral Materials Act of 1947, consistent with the NCA Act.



Copper Mine in the Jackson Mountains 1912

Photo Credit *